

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6041

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 1637

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, IS, JO

SUBJ: WEST BANK ATTITUDES TOWARD PEACE EFFORTS

1. SUMMARY. FRUSTRATION, CONFUSION, AND DISCOURAGEMENT MARK CURRENT WEST BANK ATTITUDE TOWARD PEACE EFFORTS. MOST ARAB CONTACTS EXPRESS VIEW RECENT GOI STATEMENTS AND MILITARY MOVES SHOW ISRAEL DOES NOT WANT PEACE, AND THERE IS SOME CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE SHIFT IN US POLICY. CONFUSION EXISTS OVER HOW PAL-ESTINIAN REPRESENTATION ISSUE LIKELY TO BE RESOLVED, COUPLED WITH INCREASING FRUSTRATION ARISING FROM WIDESPREAD CONVICTION THAT NO ONE REALLY CARES WHAT WEST BANKERS THINK OR WANT. END SUMMARY.

2. IN TALKS DURING RECENT WEEKS WITH JERUSALEM AND WEST BANK ARABS, PREDOMINANT SENTIMENT EXPRESSED HAS BEEN DISCOURAGEMENT. PRINCIPAL CAUSES SEEM TO BE 1) WHAT IS INTERPRETED AS HARDENING ISRAELI POSITION ON TERRITORIAL QUESTIONS, COUPLED WITH WAR TALK AND MILITARY PREPAREDNESS MEASURES; 2) APPREHENSION THAT JORDAN AND

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ISRAEL, WITH US SUPPORT, WILL MAKE DEAL RE WEST BANK WITHOUT REGARD

TO VIEWS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS; 3) CONFUSION OVER PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION ISSUE, IN LIGHT OF CONFLICTING STATEMENTS AND POSITIONS SINCE SADAT-HUSSEIN COMMUNIQUE, AND UNCERTAINTY RE SUCH REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA CONFERENCE OR ELSEWHERE IN NEGOTIATING PROCESS.

3. CHANGE IN US ADMINISTRATION IS ADDED ELEMENT CREATING CONCERN AMONG LOCAL PALESTINIANS WHO FEAR POSSIBLE SHIFT TOWARD STRONGER US SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL. INDICATIONS OF CONTINUITY IN US POLICY SINCE PRES. FORD'S ASSUMPTION OF OFFICE HAVE BEEN REASSURING IN SOME DEGREE, HOWEVER.

4. ONE HEARS REPEATEDLY FROM LOCAL ARABS THESE DAYS ASSERTION THAT ISRAELIS DO NOT WANT PEACE, THAT THEY PLAN TO CREATE MORE AND MORE SETTLEMENTS ON WEST BANK AND HAVE NO INTENTION OF GIVING UP ANY OCCUPIED TERRITORY -- OR AT LEAST NO SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT. AS HUSSEIN LOYALIST ANWAR KHATIB PUT IT, "ISRAELIS SAY THEY ARE READY FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT CONDITIONS AND THEN LIST CONDITIONS" RE JERUSALEM, JORDAN VALLEY, WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS, GOLAN HEIGHTS, ETC.

5. VIEW SEEMS TO BE UNANIMOUS THAT DISENGAGEMENT WITH JORDAN NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT RETURN OF TERRITORY TO ARAB CONTROL, AND APPARENT CONTINUED GOI OPPOSITION TO AGREEMENT INVOLVING TERRITORIAL CHANGE ADDS TO GLOOM. GOI-GOI AGREEMENT WOULD BE ANATHEMA TO MANY, IN ANY EVENT, SINCE STRONG SUSPICION PERSISTS THAT HUSSEIN, DESPITE PROMISES OF SELF-DETERMINATION, WOULD SEEK TO RE-IMPOSE STRONG RULE FROM AMMAN. EVEN AMONG THOSE FAVORABLE TO HUSSEIN, THERE IS SOME RESENTMENT THAT MOVES TOWARD POSSIBLE DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT ARE TAKEN WITH NO REAL OPPORTUNITY FOR WEST BANKERS TO EXPRESS VIEWS OR INFLUENCE EVENTS.

6. THERE CONTINUES TO EXIST AMONG WB POPULATION STRONG SUPPORT FOR PLO AS REPRESENTATIVE OF PALESTINIANS, ALTHOUGH SOME SOURCES CLAIM IT HAS WANED SOMEWHAT DUE TO FACT THAT PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS' FAILURE TO AGREE ON COURSE OF ACTION IS HINDERING PROGRESS TOWARD ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, WHICH REMAINS PRIME OBJECTIVE. MODERATES, SUCH AS EDITOR OF ARABIC DAILY AL QUDS, SUPPORT SADAT EFFORTS TO RECONCILE POSITIONS OF HUSSEIN AND PLO IN BELIEF LACK OF UNIFIED ARAB STAND CAN ONLY BENEFIT ISRAELIS, BUT DIFFICULTIES HE HAS ENCOUNTERED ARE ALSO

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DISCOURAGING ELEMENT. MANY CONTINUE TO HOPE, BUT HOPE IS NOW LARGELY COUPLED WITH PESSIMISM RATHER THAN OPTIMISM.

7. AMONG PALESTINIAN NATIONAL FRONT SYMPATHIZERS ONE FINDS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT BUT NOT INCONSISTENT THEME. THEY NOW SEEM TO BE PERSUADED THAT WAR MAY BE ONLY WAY TO DISLODGE ISRAEL FROM ARAB LANDS AND, DESPITE CURRENT DISARRAY AMONG PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS, SPEAK CONFIDENTLY OF ARAB UNITY AND ULTIMATE

VICTORY.
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